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COUNTRY: The Netherlands/Belgium/Scandinavia

CIA [REDACTED]

SUBJECT: Attitudes toward US, Indonesia, EDC,  
Belgium, Scandinavia/Labor Matters.DATE 47 Feb 54

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Source or Clarifying Statement:

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1. I was deeply impressed by the Dutch. They and the Scandinavians are doing the most for themselves, economically, to recover from the setbacks of World War II. Anti-US sentiment, which is quite articulate in Western Europe, is almost non-existent in the Netherlands, and I encountered no evidences of bitterness toward the US on any score.
2. Politically, one senses a feeling of defeatism among the better educated classes. They have the helpless feeling of being caught between two great giants, unable to get out, and fearful that if either makes a serious mistake the Netherlands will wind up punch-drunk.
3. Indonesia is a tender subject with the Dutch. They blame the present state of affairs on the Japanese and resent bitterly that the tie with its former colony has been broken. Indonesia was felt to be an intimate, almost personalized phase of Dutch life and to a man, all Dutchmen want to resume that tie in one fashion or another, and to play a part in helping Indonesia out of the mess it is presently in.
4. I was curious to know how the people felt about EDC. After conversations with many individuals in all walks of life I concluded that they are all for it, in a helpless sort of a way. Actually, they would like to stay out of it if they could, but the world situation being as it is, they feel the EDC is a necessary expedient, and as such they support it.
5. On the matter of having to cooperate with the Belgians, however, the Dutch have quite pronounced feelings. I never met a Dutchman who liked Belgium or Belgians, and who didn't think that BENELUX was a farce in

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its ineffectiveness. Dutchmen openly dislike Belgium on every conceivable score. It is real, visible and audible antagonism. They hate the Belgians for what they have--their property, their big cars, their everything.

6. Toward Scandinavia their attitudes are just the opposite. They like the people, admire them for their industry and are enthused in their efforts to strengthen ties with them.

LABOR MATTERS

7. Labor conditions are uncommonly stable in the Netherlands. In the year and a half that I was ~~there~~ labor unrest was negligible. There was one slowdown by streetcar conductors. I don't recall any others. The Dutch don't seem to strike.
8. In my opinion, the real poser in the labor matters is what the Dutch will do with the large unemployed army of talented and skilled individuals over the age of 40. The Dutch have a prejudice against hiring persons over 40, despite their capabilities, and once unemployed, these people find it almost hopeless to get another job. This I regard as the saddest part of an otherwise healthy economy. This group has the potential of becoming a real and serious element of dissent.

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